

## NOTES FROM LONDON.

## MR. GLADSTONE—OCEAN SHIPPING—ART AND LITERATURE.

[FROM THE REGULAR CORRESPONDENT OF THE TRIBUNE.]  
LONDON, April 24.  
A notion is gaining ground that Mr. Gladstone has missed his vocation in life, and that he should have been a lexicographer. In the art of defining, and above all in the art of showing distinctions, he has no living equal. He told the House of Commons on Monday that General Gordon at Khartoum was not surrounded; he was hemmed in. The House showed some slight amazement. Mr. Gladstone proceeded to say that by hemmed in he understood that there are bodies of hostile troops in the neighborhood of Khartoum, forming more or less of a chain around it. "I draw a distinction," said the Prime Minister, "between that and the town being surrounded, which would bear technically a very different meaning." It is just possible that the distinction may not be quite so satisfactory to General Gordon as it seems to be to Mr. Gladstone. It was not to the House. It is not to the country, which once again is showing signs of impatience with the course of affairs in Egypt; impatience not unmixed with indignation.

The remarkable passage of the Oregon, of the Gannett, naturally gives rise to comment in the English press. Six days, ten hours, ten minutes beats the record; to use a nice of sporting slang, by some twelve hours, and people are already anticipating that the old hours and minutes will soon be knocked off and the old Atlantic will be confessed that she can be crossed in a clean six days. At the same time the financial condition of some of the steamship companies surprises those who look upon Atlantic voyaging as an experience of unlooked triumph. Truth, which is an authority on finance and a very outspoken one, sums up the condition of the Cunard Company in a few plain figures:

Four years ago the owners of the Cunard steamers felt impelled to allow the public to share in their profits. They therefore converted their assets into a Limited Liability Company, which was brought out with a capital of £1,000,000. On the 31st of December, 1880, the company had a profit of £200,000, or 20 per cent. on the third year 1 per cent. and on the last financial year nothing. The £200,000 profit of the company has since been reduced to £100,000, and the £1,000,000 of the company has since been reduced to £800,000, and on this £800,000 there is no dividend.

The Cunard Company, however, has contracted with Messrs. John Elder & Co., builders of the Alaska and Oregon, for two new steamers, slightly larger than the Oregon, of 7,825 tons and 1,000 horsepower each. They will cost perhaps a quarter of a million sterling apiece.

Their means are sufficient for the purpose. The truth which Mr. Labouchere misses is that the Cunard owners found themselves with a fleet of obsolete ships incapable of competing with the newer and faster ships of rival companies. They sold off their stock to a company, competition has since been fiercer than ever, and the present company is building ships of modern type. The Servia was a beginning and is a good and fast ship. Then came the Anania, which met with an accident on her first voyage last year to New-York and was laid up repairing till now, returning her service last week. The new Etruria and Umbria will be ready, I suppose, next year.

Depression in the shipping trade is far from being confined to the Cunard Company. Other great transatlantic companies share in it, and the whole kingdom shares in it. Few shipowners are earning money in any class of trade. At every great port ships are laid up in tiers, and the competition for remunerative freights is so keen as generally to reduce them to the point where they are almost unremunerative at all. Never was so much capital locked up in non-paying ships. The sailors suffer with the shipowners. Perhaps the most curious piece of testimony to the prevailing misery is to be found in the fact that the sailors believe Mr. Chamberlain's Merchant Shipping bill is expressly designed with a view to restoring prosperity to the trade and securing a livelihood to themselves. That is not an intelligent view, but it is most significant.

The change of the sailing day by the Gannett from New-York on Tuesday to Saturday has a marked effect on the delivery of the New-York and London mails. There is no mail to depart from New-York on Tuesday, all the American mails from New-York to Wednesday are necessarily forwarded by the fastest steamship leaving on Wednesday. Luckily the North German Lloyd have put on four ships of great speed, and by them we generally get these Sunday to Wednesday mails on Friday of the week following. The Servia (Cunard) brought them last week; arrived at Queenstown at 11:45 a. m. on Thursday, fifteen minutes too late for the express to London, and her mails were therefore not delivered here till Saturday morning—taking two days, or nearly one-fourth the whole voyage from New-York, to go from Queenstown to London. Such is the beautiful energy of the much-overpraised British-Post-Office. On this same Saturday arrived at Queenstown the New-York mails leaving on the previous Saturday by the Gannett ship Alaska, and these were delivered in London on Monday. The intermediate Thursday mail by the Baltic was delivered the same day. The result is therefore that the whole seven days, American mail now reaches London on seven days, Friday and Monday, or Saturday and Monday. And such seems likely to be the rule of the future.

The friends of the hideous in art are again bestirring themselves in behalf of the equestrian statue of the Duke of Wellington. A motley cohort with Mr. Peter Rylands at the head, Lord Randolph Churchill as rear guard, and Sir Robert Peel a host in himself, fought for it on Tuesday in the House of Commons. In a House of over 100 Mr. Shaw-Lefevre could get but three majority for a vote of £2,000 necessary to carry out the present scheme of carting this monstrosity away to Aldershot and setting up a new statue by Mr. Boehm in place of it. Probably in no other country in the world would so desperate a statue be set up in favor of retaining a statue condemned by every competent voice. Its advocates confess with charming simplicity that they do not care whether it is good or bad in point of art. It is a memorial to the Duke, he said for to the departed Wyatt, and Wyatt was an Englishman, while Mr. Boehm, admittedly the first sculptor in England and an R. A., was born abroad. And so the wrangle goes on. If Mr. Shaw-Lefevre had found it possible to act with more promptness on the decision of last year, and move the thing off once for all, he might have avoided all this present dispute. Once at Aldershot, the boldest partisan of the inartistic would hardly have proposed to bring it back.

It is interesting to note that the attempt to secure a new statue by competition fell through. The leading men in the profession simply refused to compete. If the architects were to be as much when new Government buildings are to be designed, there might be a hope of seeing London presently rebuilt with real splendor. Let the Minister of the day be responsible for choosing an architect responsible for his design. If his design be bad, pay him and send him about his business, and try another. There is, I admit, an objection to this scheme. It implies the possession of some knowledge of art and architecture by the Minister responsible to the country for the right use of both.

[Responsibility in art matters means more in this country than in most others. I am told on what seems sufficient authority that Mr. Pen Browning's statue has been rejected by the Royal Academy on the ground that the British public might think it immoral or indecent. The statue is a nude figure of a woman, colossal in size, and very energetic in its pose, no doubt. But this seems the last word of Philistinism in art, beyond which it might be difficult to go.

According to *The Pall Mall Gazette*, which now seems nearly to cut out *The Athenaeum* by publishing its Literary Notes a day before the weekly papers, Mr. Thomas Hughes has edited "Gone to Texas: Letters from Our Boys," which will shortly be published by Messrs. Macmillan & Co. The little volume is made up of letters containing an actual chronicle of the doings of "our boys" in this strange new land. It is a personal history which tells how the young settlers fared, how they were housed and fed, what they earned, whom they met, and what their general experiences were. I presume

it is no secret that they have in question are two sons of Mr. Hughes.

The Arnold book has provoked, as might be expected, some sharp criticism in the English press. That anyone should have been imposed upon by it is what seems to English men of letters all but incredible. "It really is surprising," observes one of them, "that not only *The Chicago Tribune* but many of the leading literary men of the city should have taken an article of such crudity and bad taste for a genuine production of Mr. Arnold's. Stronger sayings than that may be heard in private.

Five hundred pounds sterling for one of two volumes, with no chance of ever finding the second, may be called a large price. This is the sum which was bid on Monday by a dealer for Lord Gosford's copy of one-half the Mazarin Bible, so-called because a copy was first discovered in the Mazarin Library at Paris. It passes for being the first book printed with metal types by Gutenberg at Mayence, somewhere from 1450 to 1455. *The Times*, with its usual want of bibliographical knowledge, remarks that the sum paid was not more than was expected from the great rarity of the book, "though we believe the price paid for the Mazarin Bible was 700 guineas." The Althorp Library many years ago was 700 guineas. As if the account were to be taken of the fact that the present copy is but a fragment. Or as if the Althorp were the latest known instance. What sort of a bibliographer must he be who could forget the Perkins sale with its two perfect copies of this incomparable book; one a vellum selling for £3,400, and one a paper for £2,600. Even a single volume of this book is an interesting relic, but on the whole £500 for half seems dearer than five times that sum for the whole. Lord Gosford's library is not by any means a collection of the first class. It contains interesting titles, but contains also a vast number of those "books which no gentleman's library should be without." Such as came under Charles Lamb's famous ban.

## CAPITAL ENTERTAINMENTS.

## DRAMATIC STUDIES IN BLACK AND BROWN.

SANTA ANNA'S ALLEGED COAT—THEODORE THOMAS—CONGRESSIONAL AND OTHER HARBINGERS OF SPRING.

[FROM THE REGULAR CORRESPONDENT OF THE TRIBUNE.]  
WASHINGTON, May 10.—What black magician conjures up this fabled "Lady Anne" who claims the other night to a crowded house with shrieks of laughter and tumultuous applause. That same question which has been asked by hundreds, if not thousands, of "Lady Annes" before without provoking, even when uttered by the most accomplished actresses, an unusual outburst of enthusiasm. In itself it does not contain anything that is so very ludicrous, but the extraordinary circumstances under which it is heard it pronounced on Wednesday last would, I venture to say, have forced a smile from the most melancholy and doleful-looking countenance. Imagine "Lady Anne" a "Lady of color," "Gloster" as black as the ace of spades; "Queen Elizabeth" attempting to hide her coffee-colored complexion under a pound of lead powder; "Catesby" looking as stolid and good-natured as a negro only can; and "Lord Norfolk" heightening the effect of his dusky visage by putting on his head a reddish-brown wig. Imagine, further, the funeral procession, accompanied by the strains of the Dead March from "Saul," halting in the background clad in black rubber-cloth gowns with turbans to match, the haberdashers in coats of mail too short to hide the mysteries of their every-day toilet, the attendants in every conceivable costume except the correct one, all trying to look as fierce and uncompromising as if they had never served an employer in their lives—imagine all this, and then, pretend you would have kept a serious face during that performance, even were roundly by a policeman, as a colored man near me was, that "It isn't gentlemanly to laugh, you know."

It was reserved for Mr. W. R. Davis, however, in the part of "Gloster," to take the house by storm. When he appeared upon the scene and announced that the winter of his discontent was made glorious, etc., etc., the audience simply howled with delight. Not without reason either. Think of a full-blooded negro, lean, black, with grinning teeth, shaking the whites of his eyes into view at every step, dressed up as "Richard III.," and such a make-up! Lady-colored trousers hanging in folds about the legs of his wearer; top-boots scalloped at the ankle; a coffee-colored blouse with a shawl collar of the same color; a drooping red feather stuck into his hair; a wig of long, curly, black horse hair hanging wildly about his forbidding countenance; and finally, a Free Mason's or Odd Fellow's sword in his hand. To cap the climax, before he had uttered a word he was presented with a bed of flowers. I don't know how many feet square, but at any rate considerably larger than he was. If "brought down" the house, but it didn't discount him in the least, nor did he show the least sign of emotion when, at the end of the scene with "Lady Anne," he made his exit with

"Shine out, fair sun, till I have bought a glass,  
That I may see my shadow as I pass."

and the audience burst into shouts of uproarious laughter.

Some of the financial success of the undertaking another performance will be given by the company soon; and New-York will probably be afforded an opportunity, before the season closes, of seeing Shakespeare "done in black." The same company, I am given to understand, is now busy studying "Ortello."

Some stir has been caused in interested circles on account of an old coat which the National Museum authorities exhibit with the following label attached:

"Coat worn by General Santa Anna. This coat was captured by General Robert W. H. Smith, commanding General Winfield Scott's body-guard, during the Mexican War."

The Mexican Minister caught sight of the old garment, examined it carefully, and finally came to the conclusion that it was the coat of a Lieutenant of artillery and not of General Santa Anna. He so reported to the Mexican Minister of War, from whom he expects a reply in a few days. In the meantime the authorities at the National Museum swear by the genuineness of the coat, and the Museum authorities swear by the coat's coat's genuineness. The coat is a dirty, greasy old coat with a red collar and brass buttons, which they fondly hope will turn out to be Santa Anna's coat after all. Why General of the United States took the coat of a foreign General on exhibition, anyway?

Theodore Thomas has come and gone. His concert in Baltimore and the one here were great successes, financially and artistically. Especially is this true of the Wagner, but here, where the audience was sold out half an hour after the tickets were put on sale, and there would have been no difficulty in selling double the number of seats if the size of the hall would have permitted. Thomas had not been here for several years, with the exception of a concert given last Christmas Eve. I understand that he has a prejudice against the city, because there are people here—there are everywhere, but here more than anywhere else—who think—well, not, or will not, come to a concert at the proper time, and who insist upon entering the room while a piece is being performed. When he was here last he stopped the orchestra three times on this account. So-called leaders of society are said to have offended in this respect more than ordinary people. 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